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S E C R E T RANGOON 001507

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: STATUS OF NLD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN U TIN OO

Classified By: COM Carmen M. Martinez for reason 1.4 (b)

1. (S) SUMMARY: NLD deputy chairman U Tin Oo, 77, remains under house arrest, although has been allowed to visit a private clinic for medical diagnosis. He is undergoing medical treatment and may need surgery. His wife, Dr. Tin Moe Wai, met with DCM November 26 to delivered a personal note from U Tin Oo thanking the Embassy for its ongoing support. End Summary.

2. (C) Conditions of Detention: Former Burmese defense minister and NLD deputy chairman U Tin Oo, arrested in May 2003 at the Depeyin attack, was imprisoned near the Indian border until his February 2004 transfer to house arrest in Rangoon. He is confined to his home, may not have visitors, and his telephone line has been cut. His wife, grandson, and daughter-in-law also live in the house, but may come and go as they please. Security at the house has become less strict with the demise of Khin Nyunt's Military Intelligence (MI) apparatus; currently only four men (two police Special Branch and two regular police) guard the house. Heretofore MI had checked all bags and packages, but now the security personnel only note the times Tin Oo's relatives come and go.

3. (S) A Message From U Tin Oo: Emboffs have been smuggling National Geographic Magazines, messages, and some personal items to Tin Oo via relatives since his arrest in 2003. DCM met November 26 with his wife, who delivered a handwritten note from U Tin Oo. Excerpts follow:

-- Thank you so much for your kind wishes and compliments. I'm doing well now. The only trouble is a very tiny gallstone, about the size of 8mm in diameter, which I could stay under the prescription of the specialist.

-- Thanks again sending me some reading materials ... I had a good appetite, devouring all the National Geographic Magazines given ... It was great entertainment, great pleasure and gaining many knowledge, as if I was visiting all parts of the world, especially U.S.A.

-- I'm looking forward seeing you all in very near future.

4. (S) Life Under House Arrest: Dr. Tin Moe Wai (aka Aunty Shwe) said her husband has suffered from colitis and other abdominal pains and will likely need surgery for his gallstones. He was taken for diagnosis at a private clinic last month and is currently on medication. Aunty Shwe described his daily routine as encompassing morning prayers and meditation, a light lunch, afternoons spent writing his autobiography, early evening exercise in the garden, supper, and then TV news. She said she did not think he was in any unusual danger from the regime at this time, but he acknowledged he was completely at their mercy.

5. (S) Request for Assistance: When DCM asked if there was anything we could do for her husband, Dr. Tin Moe Wai mentioned two things. She said U Tin Oo's greatest wish was to have their 18-year old grandson attend a university abroad. (His father, Tin Oo's only child, is a political asylee in Japan.) Unfortunately, the regime will not issue the young man a passport, Aunty Shwe lamented. Second, she admitted they were nearly broke and needed money for food and utilities. She explained that her husband did not receive his military pension and their sole source of income was rent from a house they owned. The house was previously rented to Russian diplomats and then Western NGO workers, but the regime last year cut off the house's phone line, making it unrentable to normal tenants. Dr. Tin Moe Wai asked if the embassy could rent the house, "for only \$300 per month, or \$250 if that is too much."

6. (S) COMMENT: U Tin Oo's note and his wife's attitude were chipper in tone. Both expressed gratitude at not being forgotten by the American Embassy. Dr. Tin Moe Wai was unwilling to venture political insights on her husband's behalf, commenting only "time will tell," to several queries raised. Indeed, time will tell, and it will also take its toll on the geriatric senior leadership of the NLD, whose median age is now 80, (a figure that includes the relatively sprightly Aung San Suu Kyi, 59). End Comment.

MARTINEZ